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Does MOOTW Degrade Combat Readiness?

by

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A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract of

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As we move further into the post-Cold War era, U.S. forces must be ready to endure against all threats. We must be capable of fighting and winning our nation's wars as well as conducting peace operations in areas of regional instability. This paper researches the conduct of military operations other than war and attempts to determine if conducting these missions is detrimental to combat readiness in supporting our war-fighting CINCs.

Review and analysis of current literature revealed varied interpretations of the definition of "combat readiness." The paper concludes that combat support and combat service support functions are enhanced by MOOTW participation, while combat skills per se, are eroding.

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SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

“On the day of the battle, soldiers and units will fight as well or as poorly as they are trained. Training to high standards is essential in both peace and war; never can Army forces afford not to train and maintain the highest levels of readiness.”

U.S. Army Field Manual 100-5

Beginning in the late 1940s, the United States embarked on an unprecedented campaign against communist aggression. The Cold War, shaped within a bipolar context, pitted the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact nations versus the principles of democracy and freedom. It was the United States and its allies against the Soviet Union and its satellite states for nearly fifty years. As history shows, in 1990 the U.S. and its allies won the Cold War, and with the fall of the Berlin Wall a new era began.

This new era delivered the United States from a bipolar world with an identified aggressor into an unsteady multi-polar world facing aggressors of unknown intents and capabilities. The collapse of the Soviet Union removed a clear threat from our nation's focus and our way of life. However, it did not result in a peaceful international environment. Instead, forces were unleashed that led to stability and integration in some regions around the world, and to instability and disintegration in other regions.

Recent events indicate that regional instability predominates internationally. This instability poses new challenges for American security. Our willingness to commit forces in humanitarian operations, or in what may appear to be relatively benign peacekeeping missions, may be degrading U.S. armed forces' combat readiness.

Instability has demanded a multi-faceted approach to U.S. defense policy. As a result of today's multipolar environment, a new type of mission has become the standard for U.S. forces. These missions are termed Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW), and their focus has, to some observers, driven U.S. forces away from their traditional role of fighting our nation's wars to one of being the world's "new police force." In the words of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Our men and women continue to do a great job safeguarding America's interests around the globe and in helping keep the peace. Our people are the very best in the world. However, the current op tempo, the current ops tempo of operations, if you will, is having an effect on them and also on their family members. We still encounter frequent and persistent deployments and difficulties in maintaining readiness."¹

Readiness is crucial to our nation's security. This paper examines the debate of using U.S. forces in MOOTW and its effect on combat readiness. Supporters of U.S. armed force participation in MOOTW cite its utility in attaining U.S. national objectives and using our influence to shape the environment according to our interests and those of our allies. Critics of MOOTW participation argue U.S. readiness to support CINCs in fighting and winning our nation's wars has been reduced. This paper proposes that U.S. participation in MOOTW operations is beneficial to combat readiness of the armed forces and fully supports U.S. war-fighting CINC missions.

The National Security Strategy (NSS) of the United States demands combat readiness in all mission areas and directs the U.S. be prepared to respond to the full range of threats to our interests abroad. Smaller scale contingency operations encompass a range of military operations short of major theater warfare, including humanitarian assistance, peace

operations, enforcing embargoes and “no-fly” zones, evacuating U.S. citizens, and reinforcing key allies.² The NSS goes on to say that fighting and winning our nation’s wars is the ultimate test of our armed forces--a test at which they must always succeed.³

Joint Pub 3-07, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War*, defines the differences between war and MOOTW. The differences are sometimes clearly recognizable and it is easy to understand critics’ concerns. JP 3-07 states war occurs “when instruments of national power are unable to achieve national objectives or protect national interests any other way, [and] the U.S. leadership [decides] to conduct large-scale, sustained combat operations to achieve national objectives or protect national interests.”⁴ On the other hand, “MOOTW focus on deterring war, resolving conflict, promoting peace, and supporting civil authorities in response to domestic crises. MOOTW may involve elements of both combat and non-combat operations in peacetime, conflict, and war situations.”⁵ Joint Pub 3-07 also identifies the range of military operations:

Military Operations		General U.S. Goals	Representative Examples
COMBAT	WAR	Fight and Win	<u>Large Scale Combat Ops</u> Attack / Defend / Blockade
	MOOTW	Deter War And Resolve Conflict	Peace Enforcement Counterterrorism Show of Force Peacekeeping/NEO Nation Assistance Counterinsurgency
		Promote Peace & Support U.S. Civil Authorities	Freedom of Navigation Counterdrug Humanitarian Assistance Protection of Shipping U.S. Civil Support

Figure I-1. Range of Military Operations⁶

Figure I-1 identifies the range of operations U.S. war-fighting CINCs may employ during a crisis within their theaters. One can presume the large difference between combat arms (CA), combat support (CS), and combat service support (CSS) skills required to meet mission requirements.

Army doctrine recognizes three general types of combat forces--armored forces, light forces, and special operations forces.⁷ These units fight in direct combat--the "shooters." Combat support units, such as military police units or Air Force air refueling assets, directly support combat forces. Combat service support is "...the synchronization of essential functions, activities, and tasks necessary to sustain soldiers and their weapons systems in an area of operations."⁸ It includes support provided to arm, fuel, fix, move, man, and sustain soldiers and their equipment."⁹ This study looks at CA, CS, and CSS functions to discern if MOOTW detracts from these troops' readiness in supporting our war-fighting CINCs.

Research for this paper included a review of current MOOTW and combat readiness assessments in an attempt to refine the subject area. Section II includes support for the thesis that MOOTW enhances combat readiness. Section III counters the point, focusing on positions stating that MOOTW detracts from combat readiness. Section IV summarizes the issues. Finally, section V and VI conclude the study and offer recommendations based on the research.

SECTION II

MOOTW BENEFITS COMBAT READINESS

Throughout U.S. history, its troops have been used in MOOTW-type missions. In 1804, the United States Marines conducted a raid on Tripoli, which can be characterized as a special operations victory.¹⁰ A second decision in 1804 by President Thomas Jefferson to utilize Army officers Lewis and Clark to detail the extent of the Louisiana Purchase provides another early example of military involvement in non-traditional missions.¹¹ It can indeed be posited that MOOTW is the rule rather than the exception for the U.S. military.

MOOTW can enhance combat operations. Some missions and training are consistent; water purification, medical treatment, preventative medicine, and even engineer skills are only a few that can be sharpened during these operations and improve combat proficiency.¹² The Government Accounting Office (GAO) has offered similar conclusions. A 1995 GAO study claimed, "U.S. participation in peace operations could provide excellent experience for combat operations."¹³ Participation by a unit can in the short run enhance military capability. The challenge is to maximize the productive aspects of participation in intervention operations, yet manage involvement in a manner that reduces corrosive effects.¹⁴

There are many areas in MOOTW that enhance combat readiness as well. Combat support functions, such as military police and air refueling platforms, can thrive in and be greatly enhanced in MOOTW scenarios. In the combat support functions, MOOTW can be hugely beneficial in improving combat skills. A 1999 GAO study group found that "support units that deployed to Bosnia were not as adversely affected as combat units. In visiting military intelligence, signal and medical units in Bosnia, we found that they used most, but

not all, of their wartime skills while deployed there. Commanding officers told us that they operate in one place, whereas in wartime they would be moving with combat units, constantly setting up their equipment, breaking it down, and setting it up again as the battle progressed.”¹⁵

Peacekeeping operations can directly improve U.S. mobility readiness. United States personnel receive valuable experience in dealing with coalition partners and their equipment. Destination airfields may come under hostile fire, encouraging all deployed personnel to follow combat procedures.¹⁶ Readiness gained by U.S. mobility aircrews and their support personnel is significant. MOOTW conditions are real-time opportunities to perform under stress and perhaps under fire in some instances. Combat readiness is significantly enhanced for aircrews conducting strategic airlift and refueling during the mobilization and deployment phases of these missions. Additionally, readiness is enhanced throughout the execution phase of MOOTW operations via repeated non-mobilized, unforecast, large-scale air movement to and from during intra-theater airlift and tactical air refueling operations such as Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, and other trouble spots, including Operations NORTHERN and SOUTHERN WATCH.¹⁷ Overall, this “combat training” is excellent in the MOOTW environment. This proficiency is essential to a CINC’s ability to conduct what is often a short notice mission.

CS/CSS enhancement via MOOTW is less contentious than impact upon CA combat effectiveness. Still, a recent survey of twenty-two current and former commanders said that peacekeeping operations do help keep units sharp, thereby improving their total combat readiness. One commander said his unit “was a much better division when we came back than before we went.”¹⁸ Similarly, returnees from a United Nations deployment highlight

how their unit forged a battle-ready team capable at both ends of the mission spectrum.

Troops claimed the deployment to the former Yugoslavic Republic of Macedonia sharpened, rather than dulled, their preparation for combat by seizing the opportunity to build a truly cohesive team in which leaders were routinely given the latitude to execute without fear of failure.¹⁹

These leaders treated their deployments as opportunities. One commander stated his deployment provided “an unusual opportunity to build on scout and tanker skills--specifically, competence, leadership, reporting, navigation and most importantly, attitude.”²⁰ Additionally, his unit built on the intangible effects of combat readiness such as leadership and morale. Deployment, in his view, magnified the benefit of leading in the field immeasurably. Unit morale and cohesion saw him through rain, fatigue, and constant monitoring of operations as part of Operation ABLE SENTRY.²¹

A combat unit can be proactive in its attempt to maintain combat readiness during MOOTW deployments. To meet minimal training requirements and counter the atrophy of combat skills, the First Armored Division made efforts to provide tank and artillery training at a temporary gunnery range in Hungary for the units deployed to Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR during their initial one-year mission. The facilities and training were not “first-rate,” but rotating units out of Bosnia into nearby Hungary for short periods of time enabled those units to maintain their proficiency and levels of readiness.²²

A 1997 U.S. Army War College study found 32% of approximately 100 U.S. Army officers agreeing that OOTW missions actually improved combat readiness training.²³ “The highest marks for “significant enhancement” of combat skills were given to individual skills (53%), followed by crew skills (45%), squad skills (28%), platoon skills (31%), company

skills (14%) and battalion skills (14%).²⁴ Eleven of 19 respondents reporting improved combat readiness were from combat service support and combat support units."²⁵

A follow-on Army War College study in 1998 validated these findings. Forty-five percent of the population surveyed felt OOTW enhanced combat readiness. Additionally, the later study revealed increasing numbers of Army leaders believe that OOTW do not have a negative impact on combat readiness. In fact, more of the 1998 survey participants believed that OOTW "substantially improved" combat training readiness than did the 1997 participants.²⁶ Another Army study found that within the combat service support branch category, 43% reported their units as more combat ready, 33% reported less combat ready, 10% reported no difference, and 14% had no opinion.²⁷

Many soldiers, then, agree that MOOTW enhances combat readiness. Combat readiness can be enhanced across the spectrum of operations by creative leadership and treating each MOOTW deployment as an opportunity to learn and to increase ability to transition from MOOTW to war as quickly as possible.

SECTION III

THE CRITICS VIEW--MOOTW DEGRADES COMBAT READINESS

Not all agree with the "MOOTW-as-enhancer" enthusiasts. Their disagreement emphasizes three major points. First, critics of MOOTW assert that U.S. forces are inadequately trained for some MOOTW environments. Second, they point out that MOOTW goals and objectives are sometimes inadequate, leading U.S. forces astray during these important missions. Third, and most importantly for this paper's purpose, they propose that MOOTW degrades combat readiness below acceptable levels.

Combat operations and MOOTW missions are inherently different. Field Manual 100-5, *U.S. Army Operations* refines Joint Doctrine's "combat/noncombat" dichotomy:

States of the Environment	Goal	Military Operations		Examples
WAR	Fight & Win	War	COMBAT	Large Scale Combat Ops Attack Defend
CONFLICT	Deter War & Resolve Conflict	Other Than War	NONCOMBAT	Strikes/Raids Peace Enforcement Support To Insurgency Antiterrorism Peacekeeping NEO
PEACETIME	Promote Peace	Other Than War	NONCOMBAT	Counter Drug Disaster Relief Civil Support Peace building Nation Assistance

Figure II-1. Range of Military Operations in the Theater Strategic Environment.²⁸

Critics warn that conducting MOOTW deployments degrades combat readiness. The overall effect could be devastating to combatant CINCs and their staffs. CINCs, in

accordance with the NSS/NMS, demand combat readiness of assigned forces. If a CINC requires combat capability at a certain place or time, that force must be brought quickly to bear. Degraded combat readiness would directly conflict with a unit's ability to respond effectively in accordance with CINC direction.

Training for peace enforcement, disaster relief, or civil support, these critics assert, is not training for combat. Combat readiness is a direct product of combat training. Other than a few missions, such as raids/strikes and counterinsurgency operations, MOOTW training does not generate the same level of excitement and enthusiasm as wartime training. Training for MOOTW is not sexy and high-speed, regardless of the organizational level.²⁹ If accomplished on a "just-in-time" basis, lack of enthusiasm could affect the quality of MOOTW training and impact combat readiness to an unknown degree. Do CINCs really have complete access to all levels of combat readiness? Do "C ratings" match actual capabilities? What, in other words, is the "real focus" of training...MOOTW or war?

In a hearing before the Military Forces and Personnel Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, Representative Ike Skelton said, "...there are fundamental differences between peacekeeping and combat operations. Peacekeeping requires patience, forbearance in the use of force, and even-handed negotiation among adversaries. Combat requires the use of force quickly and decisively against an adversary. Crack U.S. combat troops must be re-trained for peacekeeping duty--trained again for combat."³⁰ During this same hearing, an Army commander was asked "What happens to their overall readiness capability during such a peacekeeping operation?" He responded, "...unit combat readiness deteriorates because of the unique environment and the inability to practice individual and

collective war-fighting skills... tough repetitive training in a realistic environment is the only thing that enables combat proficiency.”³¹

These statements clearly suggest Congressional leaders are aware of the tension in this debate. Though not a new issue, it continues to fester within political and military senior leader circles as well as among war-fighters themselves. An Army War College study cited earlier differentiates data between CSS and CA/CS functions. It found combat arms and combat support officers rating MOOTW deployments as being more negative on readiness, while CSS officers still rated the mission as enhancing combat readiness. Forty-one percent of the combat arms officers felt their units were less combat ready, 50% reported no difference, and 23% had no opinion. For the combat support branch category, 39% reported less combat ready, 33% reported no difference, and 6% had no opinion.”³²

The 1995 GAO report that earlier acknowledged opportunities inherent in peace operations also brought to light numerous examples of combat skills atrophy. It suggested that although many military skills were complimentary to war-fighting skills, the skills at greatest risk are certain combat skills. Most notably artillery, air defense artillery and anti-armor skills appeared to quickly degrade due to lack of opportunities to utilize or train them while deployed.³³

The U.S. Air Force has also seen qualitative costs. After several years of MOOTW operations, the impact is being felt and reported in mainstream news reports. Units are going through training at reduced manning levels. Mission capable rates for F-16s and F-15s are 77% overall versus 85-90% prior to the Gulf War.³⁴ The dramatic increase in peace operations tempo in the early 1990s has affected the Air Force’s ability to conduct Major Regional Conflict combat operations in both the short and long run. In the short run, peace

operations provide little opportunity for fighter pilots to practice bombing and air-to-air combat. In the long run, the open-ended of peace operations has created serious quality of life issues.³⁵ In the words of Lt Gen Patrick K. Gamble, AF Deputy Chief of Staff for Air and Space Operations, "High operations tempo, aging aircraft and the need to rotate forces through several deployed locations is putting considerable strain on Air Force personnel and their ability to maintain our force in a high state of readiness."³⁶

Another aspect of the MOOTW and combat readiness debate is high operations tempo combined with U.S. force downsizing. In comparing effects, neither high ops tempo nor military downsizing singularly affect MOOTW or combat readiness. However, it can be asserted that the collective aggregation of these issues has resulted in dramatic decreases in U.S. readiness. "The Army's 111 combat brigades of 1989 have been reduced to 63, [and] three brigades are needed to maintain one brigade on peace support operations."³⁷ The Air Force has likewise seen too many commitments. "Since 1986, it has downsized by nearly 40%, while experiencing a four-fold in our operational commitments."³⁸ From 1945 to 1989, U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR) participated in only 29 peacekeeping missions. However, from 1991 USAREUR has participated in over 100 missions, while decreasing its numbers from 213,000 Army personnel to 62,000 in 1999.³⁹

From a personnel perspective, high volume MOOTW deployments are also negatively affecting readiness via low morale. This tempo is hard on family life and the U.S. military is losing good people because of it. Ops tempo has been linked to retention, family instability, and medical readiness affecting the soldiers' health. Predicting these outcomes serves as a guide for policy makers in anticipating shortfalls in readiness, if they attempt to understand how far a unit can be pushed before effectiveness is significantly degraded.⁴⁰

SECTION IV

COMPARE AND CONTRAST--AN ANALYSIS

This paper asked the simple question "Does conducting military operations other than war degrade combat readiness for our war-fighting CINCs?" Numerous assumptions were made. First, it was noted that our U.S. war-fighting CINCs must have combat ready forces available at all times to conduct their National Command Authority-directed missions. Second, the study did not differentiate between MOOTW missions as identified in figure I-1 or II-1, but looked at them as a whole entity. Third, the study did not differentiate between services. There is support for both sides of the debate. Is there a correct answer?

Overall, the evidence supported both sides of the debate. First, GAO studies conclude U.S. participation in MOOTW operations provides excellent experience for combat service and combat service support operations. On the other hand, according to the GAO, certain combat skills can atrophy and a unit's war-fighting capability is degraded. The argument is thus explicit, as both GAO studies suggested MOOTW both enhances and detracts from combat readiness.

Second, it is interesting to contrast the U.S. Army War College studies. The differences are notable. First, the majority of both groups of participants felt MOOTW degraded combat readiness, especially in the combat arms functions. However, the numbers supporting MOOTW combat service/combat service support readiness enhancement grew in the later study. The later study also suggested that more U.S. leaders believe MOOTW does not have a negative impact, or, is having less an impact on combat readiness than in previous years. This suggestion could stem from the simple fact that our forces are conducting more

and more MOOTW, and incidents of full-fledged combat are decreasing. Both studies suggested enhanced combat readiness from the combat support/combat service support areas, as well as decreased readiness of the combat arms forces.

Third, the Air Force perspective concurs that combat support and combat service support units readiness is enhanced by participation in MOOTW missions. The Air Force's air mobility mission, as a combat support function, is greatly enhanced by MOOTW. This mobility analogy shows excellent comparisons as the wartime job of its mobility specialists are nearly identical. However, the combat readiness of its fighter forces (as CA platforms) decreases during MOOTW because they are unable to practice bombing or conducting air-to-air engagements. The Air Force also looks to long-term effects on its people, as long-term participation tends to create personnel hardships and reduced quality of life issues.

A fourth point can be made with respect to the 1993 Congressional testimony. High ops tempo, decreased manning, and high rotations through deployed MOOTW locations appear to be straining our forces. This aspect is important because it shows a growing strain from MOOTW deployments since 1993. Decreased manning and high operations tempo does affect soldiers and units. These studies are significant because they impact our most important resource: our people in uniform. Simply put, high ops tempo and MOOTW deployments affect morale, family stability, and medical readiness. As a result, the service member suffers, unit morale suffers, and ultimately it can be argued that combat readiness suffers as well.

In summary, the data shows that combat readiness can, in fact be enhanced by participation in MOOTW for combat support/combat service support functions. Conversely, combat readiness of combat arms forces deteriorates from MOOTW participation over time.

Section V

CONCLUSION

To debate the issue in a meaningful way, "combat readiness" must be clearly defined. Most evidence supports the claim that MOOTW enhances combat support and combat service support function readiness, fully supporting the needs of the war-fighting CINCs. A basic conclusion of this study about MOOTW deployments is that creative leadership is key to maintaining combat readiness during MOOTW deployments. These deployments then, must be treated as opportunities to practice wartime skills in a non-combat environment in order to maintain skills. Creative commanders can enhance training for combat during deployments conducting MOOTW operations.

On the other hand, it can be concluded that MOOTW degrades combat arms functions. The challenge for U.S. senior leaders and military commanders is to prepare our forces for MOOTW while maintaining full combat readiness. As a fighting force, we must be prepared to respond across the spectrum of conflict. The potential for regional instability and disintegration will force the U.S. military to focus on small contingencies and MOOTW-type action. This must be balanced by our ability to fight two major regional contingencies nearly simultaneously. What then, is to be done?

SECTION VI

RECOMMENDATIONS

It will take gifted leaders to maximize potential positive effects of MOOTW to all combat functions, enhancing readiness for all. Senior leaders must focus on their people. This section addresses the MOOTW/combat readiness challenge. Several options are possible:

1. The United Nations (U.N.) implement a standing, civilian-based, rapid reaction force--ready to go at a moment's notice to any location in the world. This all-civilian, volunteer force would be trained, ready to mobilize, and be modeled after military units--a "global police force." This force would be capable of multi-faceted operations other than war, similar to deployed military capability. This action would immediately free up U.S. military forces to focus on their real mission--fighting and winning our nation's wars. It would require full-fledged support of all U.N. members and their populations.
2. Each branch of the U.S. military designate some CS/CSS units as "MOOTW-only." All CA functions would be designated as "combat only." This would equate to a "peacetime military" for some CS/CSS units, and isolate combat functions for use during war. This option would require a large influx of new service members to fill in the gap left by those designated as MOOTW specialists.
3. U.S. civilian leaders redefine, and limit, use of the military for only vital interests. This would limit participation of U.S. forces, leaving them trained and ready for defense of vital interests.

4. The Department of Defense (DoD) increase required annual formal education and training of humanitarian issues at all levels of military and civilian leadership. MOOTW pre-deployment “just-in-time” (JIT) training is not sufficient. Once directed to deploy, JIT training will enhance annual training in order to better focus on specific situations so participants will know what is expected of them. This training would focus on real world events and allow military members to know in advance of their readiness requirements. This would also include increased opportunities for deployed units to “train while deployed,” to include mobile simulator modules accompanying units while deployed.

DoD is obviously restrained by budget and resource limitations. Option one is cost-prohibitive from the U.N. perspective. Although a solid idea from the U.S. perspective, the implications for the U.N. are expensive as well as sensitive when considering sending civilians into potential hotspots. Option two would be prohibitively expensive from a U.S. standpoint. The U.S. does not have the financial or personnel resources to support both a “peacetime” and a “wartime” force. The U.S. military would also be unable to fill in the gap of those forces lost to the new MOOTW mission focus.

Perhaps the optimal solution is a combination of options three and four. U.S. senior leaders must be cognizant of potential degraded readiness of its combat “shooter” forces, as well as potential morale problems affecting readiness. Senior leaders will have to be more dependent on U.N. and coalition participation and influence. These options would also be more cost effective for U.S. forces. Education and training of forces will be an important step in maintaining combat readiness. Additionally, future debate and surveys must clearly delineate between combat and combat service support impacts. This study looked at “the

whole” and it was clear MOOTW enhances CS/CSS units, but can degrade combat arms units.

This paper focused on the debate over U.S. participation in military operations other than war and its effect on combat readiness of U.S. forces. The debate centered on whether MOOTW participation enhances or detracts from overall combat readiness. The thesis of this research project was that U.S. participation in MOOTW missions is beneficial to combat readiness of the armed forces and fully supports U.S. war-fighting CINCs missions.

Both sides can claim victory in the debate. One side can choose to emphasize that participation in MOOTW does enhance combat support and combat service support functions. The larger problem lies in the contrary conclusion regarding “combat shooters” and their decreased readiness as a result of MOOTW participation. In both cases, creative leadership and treating MOOTW deployments as opportunities are key to effective training for all while deployed.

Undoubtedly, this debate will wage for years to come. It is essential to realize that our troops deserve the best training and education possible. Therefore, it is vital U.S. senior leaders select this training carefully. Above all, we must support the troops and give them what they need to conduct U.S. missions as directed and to keep them mission ready across the entire spectrum of operations.

SECTION VII

ENDNOTES

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